

(b) the response to this large expenditure;

(c) whether Government have initiated any *suo moto* action to detect, find, prosecute and punish businessmen and businesses for violating various laws; and

(d) if so, the *suo moto* actions taken during the last six months by Government giving the total numbers, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) Department of Consumer Affairs being the nodal Department for consumer welfare and consumer protection has launched a multi media campaign for creating consumer awareness in the country.

(b) The impact of the campaign is reflected in increase in number of calls on National Consumer Help Line and queries on the website of Consumer Online Resources and Empowerment (CORE) Centre, both initiatives supported by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

(c) and (d) Consumer fora at District, State and National level have been set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, to deal with the cases relating to consumer rights violations.

Export of sugar

304. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to permit the private traders to export sugar to foreign countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof including the details of quantity of sugar proposed to be exported; and

(c) whether any condition has been imposed on the export and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (c) In order to keep the prices of sugar in the domestic

market under check, the Central Government has banned export of sugar upto 31.03.2007, *vide* Notification No. 18 dated 04.07.2006 issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The question of permitting the private traders to export sugar can be considered only when the ban on export of sugar is relaxed or lifted.

Arresting the rising prices of essential commodities

305. SHRI AMAR SINGH:

SHRI JAI PARKASH AGGARWAL:

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that food items like wheat and pulses have been becoming costly everyday;

(b) if so, what are the specific reasons for price rise which has been hitting hard the common people;

(c) whether Government have taken any action to arrest the rising trend of prices of essential commodities and also ensure the proper supply of the food items to consumers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the result achieved therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) Government are aware of the increase in the prices of certain food items such as wheat and pulses during the past several months. The reasons for rise in prices of wheat and pulses are shortfall in domestic supplies relative to demand and hardening of international prices.

(c) and (d) Government has taken the following steps to check the rise in prices and to augment the overall supply of wheat, pulses and edible oils:

(i) State Trading Corporation has already contracted for import of 55 lakh tonnes of wheat to supplement domestic availability, of which 22.65 lakh tonnes of wheat have been received by FCI till 20.11.06.